

What is claimed is:

1. A method by which a first device (11) provides a connection (14) to a second device (12), characterized by:

5 a step (20) in which the first device (11) obtains association information (11d 11d') including a list of at least two possible bearers for providing the connection (14); and

10 a step (28) in which the first device (11) selects one of the at least two possible bearers based on a predetermined selection strategy (11b) or by trying each of the at least two possible bearers in turn until the connection (14) is made;

15 thereby automatically selecting a bearer for providing the connection (14) to the second device (12) without requiring an input by a user of the first device (11) at the time of providing the connection (14).

2. A method as in claim 1, further characterized by:

a step (20) in which the association information is stored in a contacts bearer data store (11d 11d'); and

20 a step (24) in which the first device (11) refers to the contacts bearer data store (11d 11d') accessible to the first device (11) to obtain a list of at least two possible bearers for providing the connection (14).

3. A method as in claim 2, further characterized by:

25 a step (24) in which the first device (11) refers to an owner bearer data store (11c) to obtain a list of bearers available to the first device (11) and also refers to a bearer selection strategy data store (11b) to obtain the predetermined selection strategy; and

a step (25) in which the first device (11) refers to the contacts bearer data store (11d 11d') to obtain a list of possible bearers for providing the connection (14) and an address for each of the possible bearers; and

5 a step (26) in which the first device (11) eliminates from the list of possible bearers any bearer that does not occur on the list of available bearers.

10 4. A method as in claim 1, further characterized in that a public source of contact information is used in the step (20) of obtaining association information (11d 11d').

15 5. A method as in claim 1, further characterized in that in the step (20) of obtaining association information (11d 11d'), the second device (12) communicates to the first device (10) the association information needed by the first device (10) for automatically selecting a bearer for communication with the second device (12).

20 6. A method as in claim 1, wherein the predetermined selection strategy (11b) indicates selecting a bearer based on at least one of the following selection criteria: acceptable price; acceptable bandwidth; acceptable latency; as ordered in a list (11d 11d') hosted in the first device (11); fastest to connect when the first device (11) attempts to make different connections in parallel to the second device (12) via different possible bearers; wherein the acceptable price, acceptable bandwidth, and acceptable latency are as compared to predetermined thresholds for price, bandwidth and latency.

25 7. A method as in claim 6, wherein the predetermined threshold for latency indicates a minimum quality of service (QoS) requirement for the connection (14).

8. A method as in claim 7, further comprising a step (29) of periodically checking the QoS requirement during communication via the connection (14) and initiating a bearer change if the QoS is no longer sufficient.

5       9. A method as in claim 1, wherein the association information (11d 11d') includes a bearer identifier for each of at least two different bearers associated with the second device (12).

10      10. A method as in claim 9, wherein the association information (11d 11d') further includes an address for use with each bearer associated with the second device (12).

15      11. A method as in claim 1, wherein in the step (28) of selecting a bearer, the first device (11) attempts to connect to the second device (12) based on an association of the second device (12) linking the second device (12) to a name of an intended recipient.

20      12. A method as in claim 11, wherein in the step (28) of selecting a bearer, the first device (11) attempts to connect to the second device (12) using the at least two different bearers included in the association information (11d 11d') as associated with the second device (12).

25      13. A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a first device (11), said computer program code for use in providing for the first device (11) a connection (14) to a second device (12), said computer program code comprising:

computer program code for causing the computer processor to perform a step (20) in which the first device (11) obtains association information (11d 11d') including a list of at

least two possible bearers for providing the connection (14);  
and

computer program code for causing the computer processor  
to perform a step (28) in which the first device (11) selects  
one of the at least two possible bearers based on a  
predetermined selection strategy (11b) or by trying each of  
the at least two possible bearers in turn until the connection  
(14) is made;

said computer program code thereby providing  
functionality for automatically selecting a bearer for  
providing the connection (14) to the second device (12)  
without requiring an input by a user of the first device (11)  
at the time of providing the connection (14).

14. A computer program product as in claim 13, further  
characterized by:

computer program code for causing the computer processor  
to perform a step (20) of storing the association information  
in a contacts bearer data store (11d 11d'); and

computer program code for causing the computer processor  
to perform a step (24) in which the first device (11) refers  
to the contacts bearer data store (11d 11d') accessible to the  
first device (11) to obtain a list of at least two possible  
bearers for providing the connection (14).

15. An apparatus included in a first device (11) for enabling  
the first device (11) to provide a connection (14) to a second  
device (12), characterized by:

means (11a) for obtaining association information (11d  
11d') including a list of at least two possible bearers for  
providing the connection (14); and

means (11a) for selecting one of the at least two  
possible bearers based on a predetermined selection strategy

(11b) or by trying each of the at least two possible bearers in turn until the connection (14) is made;

thereby enabling automatic selection of a bearer for providing the connection (14) to the second device (12) without requiring an input by a user of the first device (11) at the time of providing the connection (14).

16. An apparatus as in claim 15, further characterized by:

means (20) for storing the association information in a contacts bearer data store (11d 11d'); and

means (24) by which the first device (11) refers to the contacts bearer data store (11d 11d') accessible to the first device (11) to obtain a list of at least two possible bearers for providing the connection (14).

17. An apparatus as in claim 15, wherein the predetermined selection strategy (11b) indicates selecting a bearer based on at least one of the following selection criteria: acceptable price; acceptable bandwidth; acceptable latency; as ordered in a list (11d 11d') hosted in the first device (11); fastest to connect when the first device (11) attempts to make different connections in parallel to the second device (12) via different possible bearers; wherein the acceptable price, acceptable bandwidth, and acceptable latency are as compared to predetermined thresholds for price, bandwidth and latency.

18. An apparatus as in claim 15, wherein the association information (11d 11d') includes a bearer identifier for each of at least two different bearers associated with the second device (12).

19. An apparatus as in claim 15, wherein the means (28) for selecting a bearer is so adapted that the first device (11) attempts to connect to the second device (12) based on an

association of the second device (12) linking the second device (12) to a name of an intended recipient.

20. A system comprising a first device (11) and a second device (12), with the first device (11) including an apparatus for  
5 enabling the first device (11) to provide a connection (14) to the second device (12), the system characterized in that the apparatus comprises:

means (11a) for obtaining association information (11d 11d') including a list of at least two possible bearers for  
10 providing the connection (14); and

means (11a) for selecting one of the at least two possible bearers based on a predetermined selection strategy (11b) or by trying each of the at least two possible bearers in turn until the connection (14) is made;

15 thereby enabling automatic selection of a bearer for providing the connection (14) to the second device (12) without requiring an input by a user of the first device (11) at the time of providing the connection (14).

21. A system as in claim 20, further characterized in that the  
20 apparatus also comprises:

means (20) for storing the association information in a contacts bearer data store (11d 11d'); and

25 means (24) by which the first device (11) refers to the contacts bearer data store (11d 11d') accessible to the first device (11) to obtain a list of at least two possible bearers for providing the connection (14).

22. A system as in claim 20, wherein the predetermined selection strategy (11b) indicates selecting a bearer based on at least one of the following selection criteria: acceptable price; acceptable bandwidth; acceptable latency; as ordered in a list  
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(11d 11d') hosted in the first device (11); fastest to connect when the first device (11) attempts to make different connections in parallel to the second device (12) via different possible bearers; wherein the acceptable price, acceptable bandwidth, and acceptable latency are as compared to predetermined thresholds for price, bandwidth and latency.

5 23. A system as in claim 20, wherein the association information (11d 11d') includes a bearer identifier for each of at least two different bearers associated with the second device (12).

10 24. A system as in claim 20, further characterized in that the apparatus is such that the means (28) for selecting a bearer is so adapted that the first device (11) attempts to connect to the second device (12) based on an association of the second device (12) linking the second device (12) to a name of an intended recipient.